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0743 :ALERT--SAC:

BY HOWARD SILBER

OMAHA, OCT. 25, REUTER--THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND, PRINCIPAL NUCLEAR DETERRANT FORCE OF THE UNITED STATES, PLACED ITS BOMBER AND MISSILE UNITS ON AN INTENSIFIED ALERT TODAY.

AT SAC HEADQUARTERS HERE, MEMBERS OF THE BATTLE STAFF WERE CALLED TO DUTY AT ABOUT 2 A.M. CENTRAL DAYLIGHT TIME--A STEP WHICH HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN SINCE THE 1962 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS.

IT WAS LEARNED THAT AT SAC BASES IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES B-52 BOMBER CREWS ALSO WERE PUT ON A HEAVIER THAN NORMAL ALERT.

EXTRA SECURITY MEASURES ALSO WERE IN FORCE AT THE MINUTEMAN AND TITAN II BASES IN NINE STATES.

HOWEVER, THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT THE ALERT STATUS WAS SHORT OF WHAT WOULD BE IN FORCE IF A WAR SITUATION WERE IMMINENT AND THAT CERTAIN SECURITY RESTRICTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN ORDERED INITIALLY WERE BEING RELAXED FOUR HOURS AFTER THE ALERT WAS CALLED.

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0743 :ALERT--SAC 2 OMAHA:

ONE INDICATION OF THAT WAS THE FACT THAT THIS REPORTER WAS ADMITTED TO OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, WHERE SAC HEADQUARTERS IS LOCATED, AT 6A.M. CDT.

HOWEVER, EVEN WITH THE UNUSUAL CONDITIONS APPARENT, SPOKESMEN FOR THE COMMAND SAID THEY COULD NOT COMMENT ON MOVES THEY MIGHT BE TAKING IN RELATION TO THE MIDEAST SITUATION AND REFERRED ALL QUERIES TO THE PENTAGON.

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER AN AIRBORNE ALERT FORCE OF BOMBERS CARRYING NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED WAS MET WITH SILENCE. AN AIRBORNE ALERT WOULD NORMALLY BE INSTITUTED IN THE EVENT OF A SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL CRISIS.

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0744 :ALERT--SAC 3 OMAHA:

IT WAS LEARNED THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF B-52 CREWS HAD BEEN PLACED ON GROUND ALERT. THEY HAVE THE ABILITY TO TAKE TO THE AIR WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN 15 MINUTES OR LESS.

UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS, SAC TRIES TO KEEP ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF ITS B-52 FORCE ON A 15-MINUTE NUCLEAR ALERT. HOWEVER, THAT LEVEL HAD BEEN REDUCED SUBSTANTIALLY AS A RESULT OF THE HEAVY COMMITMENT OF THE BIG BOMBERS IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC AND INDOCHINA.

SAC SAID IT HAS ABOUT 400 B-52S AND SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 50 FB-111 BOMBERS. HOWEVER, THE FORCE OF B-52S AVAILABLE FOR OPERATIONS PROBABLY NUMBERS NO MORE THAN BETWEEN 300 AND 350. OF THAT TOTAL, ABOUT 125 ARE ON GUAM AND 50 ARE IN THAILAND.

SAC ALSO HAS 1,000 MINUTEMEN AND 54 TITAN II INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES.

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